

**Oxford University Department of Computer Science
Undergraduate Supervisory Committee**

Examination Conventions for Preliminary Examinations 2021

Examination conventions are the formal record of the specific assessment standards for the course or courses to which they apply. They set out how examined work will be marked and how the resulting marks will be used to arrive at a final result and classification of an award.

This document establishes the examining conventions to be used in the following public examinations:

Preliminary Examination in Computer Science

Preliminary Examination in Mathematics and Computer Science

Preliminary Examination in Computer Science and Philosophy

Conventions for papers that fall under the responsibility of the Mathematical Institute or the Faculty of Philosophy are as set out in their examination conventions.

1 Rubrics

1.1 Computer Science

You will have to pass four papers for Computer Science Preliminary Examinations. They will be online open-book examinations. You will have three hours to complete each exam, and an extra 30 minutes of technical time, to download the exam paper and upload your solutions. For guidance about open-book exams, please read [the University's Guide for Candidates](#). If there is some reason why you need to have [alternative examination arrangements](#), please get in touch with your college.

A10097W1 Functional Programming and Design and Analysis of Algorithms contains eight questions (four on each constituent course); candidates should answer no more than five questions, with no more than three questions from either half of the paper.

A10098W1 Imperative Programming contains eight questions (two on Part 1, three on each of Parts 2 and 3); candidates should answer no more than five questions, with no more than two questions from any part of the paper.

A10100W1 Discrete Mathematics, Probability, and Continuous Mathematics contains nine questions (three on each constituent course); candidates should answer no more than five questions with no more than two from each section.

A10101W1 Digital Systems, Linear Algebra and Introduction to Formal Proof contains eight questions (three on Digital Systems, three on Linear Algebra and two on Introduction to Formal Proof); candidates should answer no more than five questions with no more than two from each section.

1.2 Mathematics and Computer Science

Mathematics & Computer Science candidates take five written papers, this year as open-book exams; **A10097W1 Functional Programming and Design and Analysis of Algorithms** and **A10098W1 Imperative Programming** as described above, and also:

A10138W1 Mathematics I is of 2.5 hours' duration (plus 30 minutes technical time) and contains seven questions (four on Part A and three on Part B); you should submit answers to no more than five questions. You should submit answers to no more than three questions from Section A and no more than two questions from Section B.

A10139W1 Mathematics II is of 2.5 hours' duration (plus 30 minutes technical time) and contains seven questions (three on Part A, three on Part B and one on Part C); you should submit answers to no more than five questions. You should submit answers to no more than two questions from Section A and to no more than two questions from Section B.

A10149W1 Continuous Mathematics and Probability is of 2.5 hours' duration (plus 30 minutes technical time) and contains six questions (3 on each constituent course); candidates should answer no more than four questions.

1.3 Computer Science and Philosophy

Computer Science and Philosophy candidates take five written papers; **A10097W1 Functional Programming and Design and Analysis of Algorithms** and **A10098W1 Imperative Programming** as described above, and also:

A10102W1 Discrete Mathematics and Probability is of 2.5 hours' duration (plus 30 minutes technical time) and contains six questions (3 on each constituent course); candidates should answer no more than four questions.

A10103W1 Introduction to Philosophy is of 3 hours' duration (plus 30 minutes technical time) and contains twelve questions (six on Part A and six on Part B); candidates should answer four questions, including at least one from each section.

A10134W1 Elements of Deductive Logic is of 3 hours' duration (plus 30 minutes technical time) and contain typically seven or eight questions; candidates should answer four questions. If you answer more than four questions, your overall mark will be determined by your four best answers.

2 Marking

2.1 Marking scheme

All questions in Computer Science prelims are marked out of 20.

Distinction 14-20 marks	A completely or almost completely correct answer to the whole question.
Pass 8-13 marks	Standard material substantially correct plus substantial progress on the other parts of the question; or standard material substantially correct and some minor progress on the other parts of the question.
Fail 0-7 marks	Very poor and very limited answer.

Table 1: qualitative descriptors for questions.

2.2 Moderation and classification

The Examiners translate the raw marks on each paper into University Standardised Marks (USMs) out of 100.

Agreed final marks for individual papers will be expressed using the following scale:

70-100	Distinction
40-69	Pass
39-0	Fail

For all Computer Science papers, model solutions are provided. *Each script is marked by an examiner or assessor and is checked independently to ensure that all parts have been marked and the marks and part-marks have been correctly totaled and recorded.*

General consideration of disruption as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic will be taken into consideration at the marking stage; individualised consideration based on a candidate's Mitigating Circumstances Notice to Examiners will be taken into consideration at the exam board stage.

2.3 Scaling

The Examiners may choose to scale marks where in their academic judgement:

- a) a paper was more difficult or easy than in previous years, and/or;
- b) an optional paper was more or less difficult than other optional papers taken by students in a particular year, and/or
- c) a paper has generated a spread of marks which are not a fair reflection of student performance on the University's standard scale for the expression of agreed final marks, i.e. the marks do not reflect the qualitative marks descriptors.

Such scaling is used to ensure that candidates are not advantaged or disadvantaged by any of these situations. In each case, examiners will establish if they have sufficient evidence for scaling. Scaling will only be considered and undertaken after moderation of a paper has been completed, and a complete run of marks for all papers is available.

If it is decided that it is appropriate to use scaling, the examiners will review a sample of papers either side of the classification borderlines to ensure that the outcome of scaling is consistent with academic views of what constitutes an appropriate performance within in each class.

Detailed information about why scaling was necessary and how it was applied will be included in the Examiners' report and the algorithms used will be published for the information of all examiners and students.

3 Penalties

3.1 Short-weight convention and departure from rubric

The maximum deduction that can be made for short weight should be equivalent to the proportion of the answer that is missing.

Where a candidate has failed to answer a compulsory question, or failed to answer the required number of questions in different sections, the complete script will be marked and the issue flagged. The board of examiners will consider all such cases so that consistent penalties are applied.

3.2 Penalties for non-submission

Failure to submit an open-book examination script, except when prevented by illness or other urgent cause and approved by the Proctors, will result in the failure of the assessment. The mark for any resit of the assessment will be capped at a pass.

3.3. Penalties for plagiarism

Candidates must avoid plagiarism in all submitted work. Candidates may plagiarise, deliberately or inadvertently, through lack of acknowledgement of the words or ideas of others, paraphrasing, collusion, inaccurate citation, failure to acknowledge assistance, or use of material written by professional agencies or other persons. Candidates are advised to consult Appendix A of the General Course Handbook, the University's online guide and complete the online course in avoiding plagiarism.

Assessors should mark work on its academic merit. Depending on their severity, cases of suspected plagiarism may be referred to the Proctors for investigation or may be dealt with by the board of examiners. If dealt with by the board of examiners (i.e. if material under review is less than 10% of the whole) as a case of poor academic practice, the examiners may deduct up to 10% of the marks available for the assessment. Where the consequence of the marks deduction would result in failure of the assessment and of the programme the case must be referred to the Proctors.

If a student has previously had marks deducted for poor academic practice or has been referred to the Proctors for suspected plagiarism the case must always be referred to the Proctors.

In addition, the most serious cases of poor academic practice should also always be referred to the Proctors.

While it is not permissible to submit work which has been submitted, either partially or in full, either for your current Honour School or qualification, or for another Honour School or qualification of this University, or for a qualification at any other institution, it is permissible to use work that has been written during the course of your studies (e.g. collections, tutorial essays). The University has an honour code for open-book exams that you have to abide by. Please read the [Open Book Exam Guide](#) on p.4 and the [University's dedicated website](#).

3.4 Penalties for late submission of open-book examination scripts

The late submission penalties for 2021 will be confirmed shortly

4 Treatment of practicals

Practicals play no part in the classification, provided that candidates achieve a pass mark for their practical work. Candidates who do not achieve a pass mark for their practical work may, at the discretion of the Examiners, be deemed to have failed the examination.

Reports on practicals are marked by the demonstrating staff as each practical has been completed, and the Examiners receive these marks, together with the practical reports themselves. The demonstrating staff are not appointed as Assessors for the purpose of marking practicals, and it is therefore Examiners' responsibility to determine what credit is given for each piece of practical work. The marks given by the demonstrating staff will serve as a guide, using the table below.

The Examiners will give no credit for practical work that was not submitted for marking by the deadline and signed by a demonstrator, unless there are extenuating circumstances.

The following numerical procedure is suggested for processing the marks. Each practical is marked on a scale S+, S, S- that is explained in the Course Handbook. These marks will be converted to numbers using the following scale:

S+	100
S	60
S-	20

The borderlines for passing the practicals are 40 for a Pass and 70 for a Distinction.

To note: Although the mark for the course 'Ethics and Responsible Innovation' will be counted into the practical mark candidates are required to pass this course in order to progress into year 2. Practical marks for this course will be marked on a scale of S-, S(pass), S, S+. These marks will be converted to a numerical mark using the following scale:

S+	100
S	60
S (pass)	40
S-	20

5 Progression Rules and classification conventions

5.1 Qualitative descriptors of Distinction, Pass, Fail

<p>Distinction (100-70)</p> <p>The candidate shows excellent skills in reasoning, deductive logic and problem-solving. He/she demonstrates an excellent knowledge of the material, and is able to use that innovatively in unfamiliar contexts.</p>
<p>Pass (69-40)</p> <p>(69-60): The candidate shows good or very good skills in reasoning, deductive logic and problem-solving. He/she demonstrates a good or very good knowledge of much of the material.</p> <p>(59-50): The candidate shows adequate basic skills in reasoning, deductive logic and problem-solving. He/she demonstrates a sound knowledge of much of the material.</p> <p>(49-40): The candidate shows reasonable understanding of at least part of the basic material and some skills in reasoning, deductive logic and problem-solving.</p>
<p>Fail (39-0)</p> <p>(39-30): The candidate shows some limited grasp of basic material demonstrated by the equivalent of an average of one meaningful attempt at a question on each unit of study.</p> <p>(29-0): The candidate shows little evidence of competence in the topics examined; the work is likely to show major misunderstanding and confusion, coupled with inaccurate calculations; the answers to questions attempted are likely to be fragmentary only</p>

Qualitative descriptors for classification

5.2 Progression and Resits

Candidates who achieve at least a Pass in the Preliminary Examination may progress to the second year. Candidates who fail to achieve a Pass may resit the examination during the Long Vacation.

Candidates who fail one or two written papers may retake just those papers. Candidates who fail three or more written papers will be required to retake all written papers. The Preliminary Examination may be retaken on at most one occasion.

Where a candidate has failed an assessment unit as a result of poor academic performance the mark for the resit of the assessment unit will be awarded on the merits of the work.

Where a candidate has failed an assessment unit as a result of not submitting an assessment item or as a result of non-attendance at an in-person examination the mark for the resit of the assessment unit will be capped at a pass.

A student who does not pass the Preliminary Examination on the first or second attempt may not normally proceed to the second year.

6 Final outcome rules

<p>For Computer Science Average-USM =</p>	<p>5 x USM for A10097W1 + 5 x USM for A10098W1 + 5 x USM for A10100W1 + 5 x USM for A10101W1) / 20</p>
<p>For Mathematics and Computer Science Average-USM =</p>	<p>5 x USM for A10097W1 + 5 x USM for A10098W1 + 4 x USM for A10149W1 + 5 x USM for A10138W1 + 5 x USM for A10139W1) / 24</p>

Where a candidate or candidates have made a submission, under Part 13 of the Regulations for Conduct of University Examinations, that unforeseen circumstances may have had an impact on their performance in an examination, a subset of the board (the 'Mitigating Circumstances Panel') will meet to discuss the individual applications and band the seriousness of each application on a scale of 1-3 with 1 indicating minor impact, 2 indicating moderate impact, and 3 indicating very serious impact. The Panel will evaluate, on the basis of the information provided to it, the relevance of the circumstances to examinations and assessment, and the strength of the evidence provided in support. Examiners will also note whether all or a subset of papers were affected, being aware that it is possible for circumstances to have different levels of impact on different papers. The banding information will be used at the final board of examiners meeting to decide whether and how to adjust a candidate's results. Further information on the procedure is provided in the *Policy and Guidance for examiners, Annex C* and information for students is provided at <https://academic.web.ox.ac.uk/mitigating-circumstances>.

8 Details of Examiners and rules on communication with examiners

Prof. Michael Goldsmith (Chair of Examiners)

Dr Andreas Galanis

Prof. Bill Roscoe

Candidates should not under any circumstances seek to make contact with individual internal or external examiners.

Appendix A: Faculty of Philosophy: marking conventions for Prelims / Mods

These marking conventions will be used by Philosophy examiners and assessors in marking work in philosophy for the First Public Examination. They apply for use in the academic year 2020-21 and will be reviewed each subsequent year.

Conventions for essay work

The following conventions will be used for marking essay work. The conventions use positive criteria (marked by "+") and negative criteria (marked by "-") in order to assign marks.

Distinction (100-70):

100-80

+ Answer displaying rigorous and independent thinking, a keen critical understanding of relevant material, transparent organisation and presentation, clear and precise expression, effective use of examples.

79-70

+ Answer demonstrating critical understanding of relevant material, transparent organisation and presentation, clear and precise expression, effective use of examples.

Pass (69-40):

69-65

+ Generally effective analysis and argumentation, demonstrating a good grasp of relevant material; transparent organisation and presentation of material; general clarity of expression.

- Some infelicity in argumentation; analysis slightly lacking in depth or focus; or minor shortcomings in choice, organisation or presentation of material.

64-60

+ Well-structured and generally satisfactory discussion, offering a mostly correct analysis of the central arguments and themes.

- Some lapses in argumentation; somewhat pedestrian, unclear or imprecise writing; or deficiencies in choice or organisation of material.

59-50

+ A structured answer offering analysis of some key aspects of the question; evidence of a good basic knowledge of relevant material.

- Incomplete answer to the question; significant lapses in argumentation or structure; poor presentation; significant gaps in knowledge of relevant material; and/or minor irrelevance.

49-40

- + Some evidence of knowledge of material relevant to question and of analytical or argumentative ability.
- Very limited answer; muddled argumentation; significant degree of irrelevance; and/or seriously flawed presentation.

Fail (39-0):

Generally, very poor quality work, showing little, if any, evidence of effective study or of analytical or argumentative skills; mostly, or wholly, irrelevant answer.

39-30

- + Some attempt to answer question; occasionally relevant material.
- Extremely limited and inadequate answer, for instance in note form; discussion largely (but not entirely) irrelevant.

29-0

Completely or almost completely irrelevant or ignorant answer; nothing or almost nothing written.

NB. Candidates should note that one of the commonest reasons for answers receiving poor marks is irrelevance. It is very important to direct your answer at the question which has actually been asked.